CONFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE FOUR HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FOURTH MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 30 June 1970, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. I. DATCU (Romania)

(Previous verbatim records in this series appeared under the symbols ENDC/PV.1-ENDC/PV.430).

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PRESENT AT THE TABLE

Argentina:	Mr. C. ORTIZ de ROZAS
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	Mr. C.A. de SOUZA e SILVA
	Mr. L.F. PALMEIRA LAMPREIA
Bulgaria:	Mr. T. PETROV
	Mr. I. PEINIRDJIEV
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Italy:	Mr. R. CARACCIOLO
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	Mr. H. OTSUKA
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Yugoslavia:	Mr. M. BOZINOVIC
Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General:	Mr. W. EPSTEIN

1. The CHAIRMAN (Romania) (translation from French): I declare open the 474th plenary meeting of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament.

2. Mr. CARACCIOLO (Italy) (translation from French): As this is the first time that my delegation has spoken since the session was resumed, I should like to associate myself with previous speakers in extending a welcome to the new heads of delegations and also to those who have come back to us after a long absence.

3. The sole purpose of my brief statement is to introduce document CCD/289, which the Secretariat has just distributed at our request and which is intended to be a specific contribution by the Italian delegation to the negotiations on the problem of chemical weapons. Perhaps you will allow me also to make a few comments and some more general observations on the question as a whole.

4. During the work of the Conference in 1969 and in 1970 a number of delegations advocated the idea of convening an international group of experts to study the problem of chemical and biological weapons and, more especially, that of the control of chemical weapons. I should like in particular to recall the statements made by the delegation of Japan on 14 August 1969 (ENDC/PV.428, para. 47) and on 10 March 1970 (CCD/PV.456, paras. 80-82).

5. The informal meeting held at the request of the Swedish delegation on 22 April, in which experts from various countries took part, confirmed the importance of the problem of the controls to be provided in negotiations on chemical weapons. What took place at that meeting showed, moreover, that in order to make a useful contribution to the achievement of the specific objectives of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, the activities of a group of experts should be guided by this Committee itself. That is the gist of the working paper which has just been distributed and is essentially designed to suggest how the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament could give the experts the directives they would need to enable them to draw up a truly useful document and offer the Conference a technical instrument useful for its study of the possibilities of control of chemical weapons.

6. In submitting this document the Italian delegation feels, in keeping with the views expressed by a large number of other delegations, that the problem of chemical weapons has certain special aspects which are very difficult to deal with -- in particular the choice of control measures -- and that this problem of controls should be considered in a systematic and detailed manner. In that context we believe that

(Mr. Caracciolo, Italy)

our initiative may help to spell out all the aspects of the problem from the procedural point of view.

7. Moreover, in our opinion we cannot renounce the idea of making some progress, however limited, while we await the conclusion of a global agreement on prohibition of the possession and production of chemical and biological weapons. Thus we are convinced that in the meantime we must devote our attention to solving the relatively more simple problem of prohibition of the possession and production of biological weapons, while at the same time actively continuing our efforts to find a solution encompassing both types of weapons.

8. With reference to the two draft conventions presented by the United Kingdom Government (ENDC/255/Rev.1) and by the governments of the nine socialist countries (A/7655), concerning respectively the prohibition of biological methods of warfare and that of the development, production and stockpiling of chemical and bacteriological (biological) weapons, Italy has already had occasion to express its views at the twenty-fourth session of the General Assembly and here in Geneva on 26 February (CCD/PV.453, paras. 25-28). We are bound to say that the discussion in the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament appears to have confirmed the soundness of the views we then expressed.

9. The representatives of the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States have, furthermore, already provided the Conference with a mass of evidence demonstrating the differences between the methods of chemical warfare and those of biological warfare in their nature, method of use and deterrent force and in the effectiveness of retaliatory measures. We therefore believe it would be difficult to undertake to renounce the development, production and stockpiling of chemical weapons unless that undertaking were included in a convention also providing for effective control measures. On the other hand it seems to us just as clear that, in view of the characteristic differences of biological weapons, such an undertaking could be accepted for these even if the control procedures were limited to the system provided in the United Kingdom draft.

10. I should like, therefore, to reiterate the support of my Government for the draft convention on the prohibition of the production and stockpiling of biological weapons submitted on 26 August 1969 by the United Kingdom delegation. In our view that draft, which is in itself an important measure of armament limitation, could also be a useful stimulus to the subsequent negotiation of other agreements on chemical weapons.

(Mr. Caracciolo, Italy)

11. I should also like to take this opportunity to express the adherence of my Government to the proposal put forward by the United States delegation on 28 April (CCD/PV.468, paras. 11 et seq.; CCD/290) to include in the United Kingdom draft the prohibition of toxins. We believe that such an amendment would considerably widen the scope of the United Kingdom draft.

12. The date of 17 June marked the forty-fifth anniversary of the Geneva Protocol (A/7575/Rev.1, Annex VI). That Protocol is, in our view, an international instrument of primary importance which, as the Secretary-General of the United Nations has so rightly pointed out, has stood the test of time and proved to be a document of historical significance.

13. Allow me, therefore, in concluding this brief statement to recall here the position taken by my delegation in its statement on 26 February on the prohibition of the use of chemical and biological weapons. We still believe that we could make the Protocol more effective and achieve definite progress by enlarging its geographic scope, thus giving it a universal character. And, as we see it, the best means of doing that might perhaps be to withdraw the reservations expressed on ratification in order to safeguard the right to use weapons covered by the prohibitions of the Protocol against non-signatory States. It is, of course, understood that the withdrawal of those reservations -- which do not affect the text of the Protocol -- would in no way derogate from the right of retaliation against countries, signatory or non-signatory, which resorted first to the use of the weapons prohibited by the Protocol.

14. Moreover, we feel that the reservations whose withdrawal we are proposing no longer correspond to the present positions of some States. Confirmation of that impression can be found in the statement made by President Nixon on 25 November 1969, when he said that the United States renounced first use of lethal and incapacitating chemical weapons.

15. We are well aware that withdrawal of reservations to an international instrument may raise legal and constitutional problems. These problems must therefore be studied very thoroughly; and the Italian delegation, for its part, will not fail to devote its whole attention to them and may revert to them later.

16. Mr. LEONARD (United States of America): As my colleagues are aware, the United States believes that the international community can and should conclude without delay a convention eliminating disease as a weapon of war. As we made clear at the end of our last session (CCD/PV.468, paras. 11 et seq.), we are prepared to see such a convention cover not only biological agents but also the lethal chemical substances known as toxins. An opportunity thus exists to take a major stride forward in arms-control negotiations. To do all that we can in this effort, I wish to put forward today precise language for amending the United Kingdom draft convention (ENDC/255/Rev.1) so that it would prohibit the use, production and stockpiling of toxins as well as biological agents.

17. The United States delegation has already described the potentially devastating effects of the use of toxins in warfare and the essential similarity between facilities required for the production of military toxins and biological warfare agents. We have also expressed the view that, although toxins are chemical substances, their characteristics from the viewpoint of arms control are so closely related to those of biological agents that the treatment of those two categories in the same convention would be not only feasible but highly desirable.

18. Accordingly we propose that article I of the United Kingdom draft convention for the prohibition of biological methods of warfare be amended to read as follows:

"Article I

"Each of the Parties to the Convention undertakes, insofar as it may not already be committed in that respect under Treaties or other instruments in force prohibiting the use of chemical and biological methods of warfare, never, in any circumstances, by making use for hostile purposes of microbial or other biological agents or toxins causing death, damage or disease to man, other animals, or crops, to engage in biological methods of warfare." (CCD/290)

19. We also propose that a similar change be made in article II (a)(i) by inserting the words "or toxins" after the phrase "microbial or other biological agents", so that toxins will be expressly included in the convention's prohibitions and requirements concerning production, acquisition, research and destruction.

20. It should be noted that in our proposed amendment of article I we have deleted the phrase "by infection or infestation". That is because we believe that the emphasis of the prohibition should be on the agents themselves rather than on the manner in which a disease is introduced.

(Mr. Leonard, United States)

21. We have circulated a working paper (ibid.) which formally proposes these amendments.

22. By including these extremely deadly agents, toxins, in the draft convention proposed by the United Kingdom, we will be greatly enhancing the scope, and thus the importance, of this arms-control measure. I trust that all those delegations that are determined, as we are, to strengthen arms-control restraints in the fields of chemical and biological weapons will appreciate the significance of these amendments. Let us not fail to seize the opportunity before us to negotiate a valuable and practical arms-control measure.

23. The CHAIRMAN (Romania): I wish to make an announcement. The Committee was informed on 28 April (CCD/PV.468, para. 26) that the co-Chairmen had received letters from Ambassador Akwei, chairman of the Committee for the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the United Nations. Ambassador Akwei asked when the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament planned to complete its work this year, and requested documentation that might be relevant to final documents for consideration at the twenty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly.

24. The co-Chairmen are responding to these enquiries as follows:

"Dear Ambassador Akwei,

"Thank you for your letters concerning the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations and the tasks entrusted to your Committee in preparing a final document or documents to be signed or adopted during the commemorative session of the General Assembly.

"At present we would like to inform you that the spring session of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament began on 17 February and concluded on 30 April. The Committee reconvened on 16 June. During the current session the Committee will be occupied, inter alia, with the resolutions regarding disarmament adopted by the twenty-fourth session of the General Assembly and the report to the General Assembly on the Committee's deliberations on all questions before it during 1970. This report will provide comprehensive documentation on the work of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament during 1970. It will be available at the end of the summer session. In view of the variety of issues with which the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament is dealing at this session, the date when the Committee will complete its work this year will be determined later in the session.

(The Chairman, Romania)

"The verbatim reports of the meetings of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament and the final reports of the Committee to the United Nations General Assembly of previous years are already available in New York. As for the material on the current session of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, we will request the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General to make it available as early as possible."

The Conference decided to issue the following communiqué:

"The Conference of the Committee on Disarmament today held its 474th plenary meeting in the Palais des Nations, Geneva, under the chairmanship of H.E. Ambassador Ion Datcu, representative of Romania.

"Statements were made by the representatives of Italy and the United States of America and by the Chairman.

"The delegation of Italy submitted a document entitled 'Suggestions regarding the possible convening of a group of experts to study the problem of controls over chemical weapons and the way in which such a group should function' (CCD/289).

"The delegation of the United States of America submitted a 'Working paper on the toxin amendment to the United Kingdom draft convention for the prohibition of biological methods of warfare' (CCD/290).

"The next meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 2 July 1970, at 10.30 a.m."

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.